

GEAR UP KY TWO PROJECT BRIEF

Abstract

The Council provides grant funds to support various activities in schools selected to participate in the GEAR UP Kentucky (GUK) program. Council (GEAR UP) staff work with schools to build activities that introduce students to the idea of going to college and how to make concrete plans to get there. The new GEAR UP project (also GEAR UP Kentucky TWO) will work with three cohorts of seventh grade students, one each in 2005, 2006 and 2007. For the remainder of the six-year grant period, program staff will work with middle schools to continue making improvements in school curriculum, instruction, and school climate to ensure that the changes achieved with grant resources can continue and activities can be continued for subsequent groups of seventh grade students.

Host sites working with the Council support the schools participating in the program. (There are seven host sites: *Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, Hazard Community and Technical College, Northern Kentucky Council of Partners, Fayette County Public School District, University of Louisville, Murray State University, and Morehead State University.*) These sites coordinate grant activities and provide fiscal oversight for the schools in their geographic areas of responsibility (GAR). GEAR UP staffs at host sites ensure that all students in each seventh grade cohort receive the seven essential activities identified by the program while they remain enrolled in GEAR UP-designated middle and high schools.

Host sites also develop a set of services designed to address specific needs of the at-risk students enrolled in their designated schools and are encouraged to provide companion services for school personnel. (Needs are primarily based on the results of the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT assessments.) Services for students must target those: 1) most at risk of achieving lower than established benchmarks; and 2) in need of additional support to get ready and succeed in a core curriculum in high school. GEAR UP staffs collect and report the progress of students receiving targeted services and the impact of the services provided for students. In general, some services will focus on middle school students only; some will focus on both middle and high school students and other services will focus on high school students only to introduce them to professional.

Conceptual Framework

GEAR UP Kentucky TWO will work with all students in the cohort (beginning at the seventh grade) over the next three years (2005, 2006, 2007). When these students begin high school, GEAR UP will continue to work with them until the first cohort (students who started seventh grade in 2005) graduates from high school. The GEAR UP program expects schools to begin making school changes so that future seventh grade students will have the same opportunities for participating in activities that prepare them for college. Even though GEAR UP funds will end in 2011, the program is working with schools to begin making changes to improve classroom instruction and enhance the ways students learn.

GEAR UP Kentucky TWO carries the same conceptual themes used in the earlier grant, which focus on activities and services in five early intervention *priority areas: awareness, rigor, engagement, access and support.* More attention will be given in this project to establishing better ways to intervene with middle school students (and their parents) to help them prepare to take a core curriculum in high school (nationally recognized as preparatory for college-level work).

Every student in each GEAR UP cohort is invited to participate in all the cohort activities and services. However, some students will receive more services to improve academic performance and to introduce them to professional careers. Some students will receive extra help in core subjects including online instruction and tutoring in mathematics and mentoring. Other students will participate in high school academies and enrichment classes to help them advance even further in core subjects and learn about professional careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, teaching, medicine and health careers.

How the Project Functions

Services to GEAR UP designated schools and students are delivered in three primary ways:

- **Host Sites:** host sites and designated schools develop a plan of services consisting of early college awareness and preparation activities for students and their parents including: college readiness assessments, college/career expositions, college campus visits, academic planning and advisement, college planning and mapping—admissions, cost and financial information.
- **The Council:** the Council provides additional services and support for GEAR UP to assure that all students and schools benefit in certain ways from the program. The activities conducted by the Council are designed for a statewide audience and are limited in scope and include: a model mentor program focusing on college planning, outreach activities to help parents understand the college planning and application process, the NFTE entrepreneurship curriculum and online instruction/intervention programs. Additionally, the Council has engaged a variety of statewide partners and vendors to contribute school improvement resources and technical assistance for schools. The primary activities provided through this vehicle are the *Institute for a College-going Culture*—a leadership development activity for school teams and the mini grant awards for schools.
- **Cooperating College Partners:** The Council (and GUK host institutions) invites area colleges not currently working with the program to submit proposals to conduct summer and after school academies for targeted students. The academies should target groups of middle school students including at-risk students (defined by the Council). Projects that recruit and select from student audiences in GEAR UP schools statewide are highly desirable.

More Information

GEAR UP is a federal program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. GEAR UP Kentucky TWO is the second award for the Commonwealth of Kentucky and is administered by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. For more information, please contact:

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